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SOME TYPES OF JUDAISM IN THE TIMES OF JESUS.

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NO LIFE can be fully estimated apart from its surroundings. The forces with which or against which a man has to work are an essential part of his life-history. In knowing them we can more adequately know him, as we study his unfolding experience. The life of Jesus is not, in this respect, exceptional. While he was and is the Savior for all times, he was no less a man of a particular time. A full knowledge of that particular time is needful to an adequate, accurate interpretation of him. Jesus was born and grew up in the midst of a Judaism whose varying types—the results of its historical development—confronted him with ideals and aims with which he had to reckon.

Because he was a teacher of religion, and every phase of Jewish life was determined by religious interests, his public ministry was from first to last amid the wondering, questioning, doubting, antagonizing representatives of those interests with which he would not be identified. A brief study of some of its types will reveal, not only the varied forms of Judaism, but also the spiritual, vital character of the Master's doctrine.

The two essentials of the Judaism of Christ's day were the law and the Messianic hope. It is in its attitude toward one or both of these that each type has its defining characteristics. Pharisaism emphasizes both; Sadduceeism, only one. Essenism emphasizes one, and by over-emphasis becomes an exaggerated Pharisaism. Hellenism according to its strength measured its interest in each. The Zealots, while holding to the one, so threw their impatient energies into the realization of the other that they were willing to wreck the nation. Here and there an earnest soul saw the spiritual import of each and rejoiced in the teachings of Jesus.

The scribes and Pharisees were the religious teachers of the nation. They were more; they were the watch-dogs of orthodoxy. In the schools and Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and in the synagogues throughout the land, they used their influence and power to glorify the law. Their ideals were virtually the same. They sought after a righteousness which was to be attained by the observance of legal requirements. In a body of traditions which expanded the Mosaic law, and applied, by refinements in interpretation, its precepts to all the details of life, they believed that they had set up a nobly comprehensive righteousness which would make surer the sanctity of the law itself. Their schools were constantly the arena of speculative discussion. They lost sight of great principles in the complexity of rules which their own ingenuity had devised. As a consequence, they externalized religious duty. Life was hedged about with petty and burdensome restrictions. Joyous, moral freedom was lost. Religion became an anxious care, in view of exacting demands, and a well-nigh hopeless confession of failure of ability to meet them. Every outward expression of fidelity was quickened. Prayer, fasting, alms-giving, the ritual of ceremonial cleansing, and the sacrificial offerings—all were attended to with punctilious fidelity. Inasmuch, however, as these were not the spontaneous, glad rendering of the spirit, but the working out of a formal requirement, they became inevitably tainted with pride, as far as one was successful, and with selfishness in that one's whole effort was solely for his own salvation. Against no trend in Jewish life did Jesus speak with plainer, severer words than against this. The Pharisaism of the New Testament is the subject of his most bitter denunciations. There were undoubtedly Pharisees and Pharisees. Many noble, sincere, earnest men were to be found among them, but the Savior's word to the best of them was, "You must be born again." To this type of Judaism we owe the form of much of Christ's instruction. With ruthless step he walked through the tangled meshes of scribal teaching and rescued the great principles of the law which their ingenious weaving had completely covered. The fatal feature of this form of Judaism was its spiritual blindness. It guarded the sabbath

day and the Scriptures with hyperscrupulous care and yet found life in neither. It had no eyes for vital spiritual realities. It dreamed, indeed, of a righteous Messiah, but in the new kingdom which he was to set up scribes and Pharisees were sure of citizenship, and the glory of it all should be in its supremacy over "the nations." Very early in the ministry of Jesus the shadow of this unspiritual force fell upon him. It required no miraculous foresight on his part to see that he must ultimately suffer under its inevitable antagonism. The scribes and the Pharisees virtually set up the cross on Calvary.

As Jesus moved about in Judea and Galilee, he crossed now and then the path of a peculiar order of men, whose white garments, kindly faces, and earnest mien would attract attention wherever seen. While among men, they were not of them. They were monks before the time of monasticism, devoted to a life of purity, poverty, and service. These were the Essenes, that strange expression of religious life in Judaism having its headquarters on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The sect was Pharisaic in its emphasis upon separation from all that was unclean, but its teaching had elements which did not originate upon Jewish soil. By no interpretation of the law could the Essenes derive from it the injunction to worship the sun, to abstain from bloody sacrifices, such as were daily offered in the temple, and to eschew marriage, and to hold themselves aloof from the life and interests of the nation. The sincerity of their piety, and their unselfish interests in others, especially in those of their order, were unquestionable. There was much in them that Jesus could sympathize with and approve of, but it is a large mistake to identify him with this exceptional type of Judaism. Asceticism, the prime mark of Essenism, was no part of the creed of the Master. His interpretation of "in the world, yet not of it" was far different from the exclusiveness of the Dead Sea community. He had another way to offer men toward that purity for which these earnest souls were striving. With one clear teaching, such as that which declared, "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man," he would have banished their priest-cooks who alone could prepare food for them. In offering

himself to them as the Messiah he would have called upon them to change their fundamental notions of the kingdom of heaven, both present and future; for they made little of Messianic expectations. The single requirement, "repent, believe in me," offered alike to noble and peasant, priest and harlot, would seem too simple to these devotees, who must needs serve three years of probation before they could have full admission to the order. Earnest, charitable, and devoted to high ideals of character, as many of the Essenes were, their power, methods, and hopes were not those of the Son of Man. Monasticism in any form or age is not consonant with the spirit of Christianity.

Whatever complexity of life Judea had to offer in the days of our Lord, it was all to be found in the busy places of Jerusalem. The outer court of the temple was a veritable gathering place of people from all nations. It was in Jerusalem that Jesus, in all probability, first met the Sadducees—that proud nobility among the priesthood who made religious interests secondary to political and social power; who also made the most of what this life could bring them, since they believed in no other. Like the Pharisees they honored the law; unlike them they refused to acknowledge the binding force of tradition. They believed in providence, but like the Gentiles they cared more for food and raiment than for any possible form of a kingdom of heaven. Court interests were more vital to them than those of the temple. A palace in their eyes was a greater institution than a synagogue. They could be strict in judgment with men, but serenely dishonest with God. A king close at hand was more important than a Lord in the sky. Liberal concessions to state and social interests were the part of wisdom. The overwrought ideals of Pharisaic scrupulosity and Essene sanctity were to them alike the creations of fanaticism. In the days of the Maccabean struggle the Pharisees had taken their stand on the true order of vital interests. Their decision was, religion first, then politics. They would have been content with religious freedom. The Sadducees reversed the order, and in consequence loved the prestige of wealth and social station. Hence, when Jerusalem afterward fell,

they disappeared. Their occupation was gone. Both their creed and their ideals made them fine specimens of worldly-minded religionists. They were as capable of understanding the beatitudes as of reading Egyptian hieroglyphics. A spiritual kingdom with love as its bond of unity, and self-abnegating service as its basis of honor and preferment, was to them simply moonshine. They were strangers to even the rudiments of spiritual knowledge. Much as they differed from the Pharisees, they were at one with them in their eager desire to stamp out the heresy of the Nazarene teacher. The chief-priests have their share with the scribes and the Pharisees in the responsibility for the crucifixion.

With the exception of some whose humble, devout lives kept true to the spiritual import of the Old Testament promises and hopes, the great body of the people followed, afar off it may be, in many instances, but nevertheless followed in the line of one of these types of which we have spoken. Before, however, we turn to speak of them, it will be well to look at some peculiar types which, in part, blend with those already given. Two of these have their distinguishing characteristic in that modifying force which for over two centuries had been more or less active in Palestine. That force was Hellenism, the attractive, enriching force of Greek culture, Greek customs, and Greek ideals. How completely it might have brought Judea itself under its magic power, had it not presumed to lay a violent hand upon the law, we shall never know. We do know that it had accomplished surprising changes in Jerusalem before Antiochus Epiphanes drove the nation into revolt. The Maccabean struggle on its spiritual side is the grim conflict of Judaism and Hellenism, and in its ongoing were crystallized the Pharisaism and Sadduceeism outlined above. Sadduceeism was naturally always open to the influences of the outside world. Its easy serenity was not once disturbed by the presence of the theater, the gymnasium, and the race-course in and near Jerusalem. It welcomed the innovations which broadened and enlivened the experience of a remote capital, and brought it into touch with the great western world. Jerusalem was no stranger to this seductive

power when Jesus walked its narrow streets. Herod had gloried in the service of Augustus, who took up Alexander's policy of unifying his empire by bringing all its diverse elements face to face with the customs and thinking of that broad Hellenism which had gathered unto itself the best products of various lands and times. From another point of view, then, than Sadduceism itself we may speak of this Hellenistic-Jewish type, and perhaps also of its converse, the Jewish-Hellenistic, for it was possible for some to keep their faith and yet see in the treasures of the Occident ways and thoughts worthy of acceptance, and in no wise derogatory to an intelligent fidelity to the law. These Jewish-Hellenists were neither Pharisees nor Sadducees, but broad-minded disciples of a true and generous Judaism. They neither lost themselves in a hasty, indiscriminate adoption of foreign customs and conceptions, nor did they turn away in indignation and scorn from anything and everything that did not bear upon its front the stamp of Judaistic origin. If once they could hear the message of the gospel, they would be ready for its world-wide import, and for its recognition of all that is good and true in every land and time.

Still another type blends in part with Pharisaism, and yet stands apart from it by reason of the fiery purpose which fairly consumed it. This was the Zealot. When the Pharisees turned aside from national interests and placed their hope of deliverance from foreign control in that faithful observance of the law which should bring in the Messiah, the Zealots heard their call to rise up and rest not till the hated Romans were forever out of the land. The law, too, was the Zealot's watchword, and his strong right arm must prepare the way and hasten the time of the Messiah's incoming. No half-measures were in his compend of duty. Rebellion, robbery, assassination were part of the desperate means by which he worked toward his aim. His zeal at last inflamed a war with Rome, made the land a desolation, and Jerusalem a mass of hopeless ruins. The humble, gentle teacher, bidding his questioners "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," must needs begin with some other word than this, if he would gain a Zealot's ear.

Surely it was no easy ministry to which the baptism called the Master. What an arduous mission to bring to Judaism the tidings of a gospel wholly spiritual; to make preparation for a worship which should require neither a Gerizim nor a Jerusalem; to found a kingdom which should make nothing of the distinctions, Jew, Greek, Roman!

Only the lowly in heart could receive it, and in Judaism such were to be found: men and women whose spiritual needs, whose humble, obscure lives, could be responsive to the glad tidings. It was this type of Judaism in which and by which Christianity began. The family in Nazareth, the family in the hill country of Judea, the fishermen by the Sea of Galilee—these, and others like them, were the points of contact of the old with the new. They were not the best types, as the world makes estimate. They were unlearned and without influence. Jerusalem, with all her wealth and power, would not, could not, see her day of grace. Her very culture had made her blind. The docile, humble mind of those who needed many lessons from Jesus before they could grasp the truth he had to give was the only one into which his truth could find ready entrance. This does not mean that no one from the other great types of Jewish religious life received his message. Scattered through the pages of the gospels are the names of those who came from among the Pharisees, the Hellenists, and even the Zealots, to Jesus. But Pharisaism, Scribism, Sadduceeism, Essenism, Hellenism, and the Zealots had other thoughts and aims and hopes than the gospel sets forth. It was in the great body of the people who followed their religious teachers, indeed, but with no such ingrained, unalterable conceptions as held the minds of those who taught them, that Jesus found response. And even then he had patiently to wait and work, opening carefully his Messianic revelation, repeating again and again the lessons of the inner meaning of the law and sacrifice, to die at last only half understood.